DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 407 523 CE 073 922

TITLE	The Role of Postsecondary Institutions in School-to-Work. Resource Bulletin.
INSTITUTION	National School-to-Work Opportunities Office, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Sep 96
NOTE	8p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National School-to-Work Office, 400 Virginia Avenue, S.W., Room 210, Washington, DC 20024; 800-251-7236; fax: 202-401-6211; World Wide Web: http://www.stw.ed.gov.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Articulation (Education); *College School Cooperation; Demonstration Programs; Developmental Continuity; *Education Work Relationship; Educational Innovation; Educational Mobility; Evaluation Methods; Institutional Cooperation; *Partnerships in Education; Postsecondary Education; Secondary Education; Student Evaluation; Vocational Education

ABSTRACT

This bulletin begins with a discussion of the role of postsecondary institutions in school-to-work. The following section presents strategies to engage postsecondary institutions in school-to-work: articulation agreements, developing partnerships and systems, coordinated learning, multiple admissions standards, assessment and follow-up, and professional development. The bulletin then presents effective practices that focus on two examples of innovative partnerships between secondary and postsecondary institutions that use articulation agreements, innovative admission standards, joint evaluation and assessment efforts, joint development of curricula, and other mechanisms to weave together a smooth school-to-work system: the University of Wisconsin System and the Greater Louisville Youth School-to-Work Initiative. Contacts and addresses for these programs are provided. The bulletin then lists 14 organizations that can provide further information on the topic. Brief summaries describe the organizations' focus and activities. (YLB)

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★RESOURCE BULLETIN

SEPTEMBER 1996

The Role of Postsecondary Institutions in School-to-Work

School-to-work systems are designed to provide all youth with access to a broad range of opportunities after their secondary education is completed. Options can include direct entry into the workforce or enrollment in a postsecondary institution. These postsecondary institutions include career, technical, two-year colleges, and four-year colleges or universities, and all can take active roles in supporting school-to-work systems and transitioning students to successful paths after high school. Postsecondary institutions offer a wealth of research and applied knowledge and a variety of other resources to transition students and to assist high schools when designing education and career preparation systems.

Postsecondary institutions take on an even more crucial role given the changing nature of work and the economy. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, about one-half of the industries that will experience an increase in the jobs available by the year 2005 will require some form of education and training beyond the secondary level. In addition, employers have found that one out of every five workers is unable to meet all of his or her job requirements because they either lacked the skills required on their job or their jobs had expanded to demand more skills. In response to this, postsecondary institutions have begun to ensure that all students have the opportunity to experience a combination of academic and career skills training at the postsecondary level. The School-to-Work Opportunities Act supports this by promoting the active involvement of representatives of postsecondary institutions in local partnerships with schools, educators, employers, organized labor, parents, young people, and community-based organizations in the operation of school-to-work systems.

Postsecondary institutions have strong community links and are equipped to provide youth with specific occupational training and career preparation activities. In addition, postsecondary involvement reinforces the value of school-to-work for traditional college-bound students, showing that work-based and contextual learning are valuable methods of preparation for success in college. As a result, the involvement of postsecondary institutions--regardless of the type or level of postsecondary institution--may benefit young people participating in school-to-work.

This bulletin presents strategies to engage postsecondary institutions in school-to-work. It then presents a listing of resources that can provide additional information and assistance to school-to-work practitioners attempting to foster stronger links with postsecondary institutions.

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Strategies

Articulation Agreements. Articulation agreements are formal agreements between secondary and postsecondary institutions that detail the roles and responsibilities of each institution in a school-to-work or workforce preparation system. Technical Preparation (Tech Prep) agreements, for example, outline a continuum of services available to youth over a four-year sequence, from eleventh grade through a two-year college experience. Other programs have extended these agreements to a "2 + 2 + 2" sequence, which involves enrollment and continual training in a four-year college after graduating from a two-year postsecondary institution.

Articulation agreements directly impact how easily young people can transition from one level of education to the next. For example, some agreements provide for high school students to take classes at local colleges and receive credit for this coursework. Articulation agreements can also help determine the content of academic and occupational curricula, and describe the allocation of responsibility for specific aspects of training and program services.

Developing Partnerships and Systems. Postsecondary institutions often have strong connections to local employers, labor unions, community-based organizations, high schools, and other postsecondary institutions. Within the framework of school-to-work, these bonds can help bring together representatives from key stakeholder groups to ensure that all are fully involved in the development, design, and implementation of a school-to-work initiative.

Postsecondary institutions can also contribute to overall system design, development, and implementation. For example, postsecondary institutions can help develop curricula that apply to both career development and postsecondary academic demands. In addition, practitioners can build on the research base of postsecondary institutions to develop systems that are relevant to all students and all sectors of the economy. Through their research and links to other institutions, postsecondary institutions can help identify which occupations are most likely to experience growth, the type of education and training that will best help young people succeed in these occupations, and methods of effectively evaluating participant and system success.

Coordinated Learning. Effectively integrating postsecondary institutions into a school-to-work system allows young people to participate in a sequence of occupational learning experiences from elementary through postsecondary education. For example, elementary and secondary schools can focus on broader work-readiness skills, such as teamwork, problem-solving, and critical thinking. Based on these experiences, youth can make more informed decisions regarding specific career paths, and can choose to enter more specific academic and occupational training programs at the postsecondary level. This can also help to make school-to-work more attractive to employers and representatives of organized labor, who may be unable to provide skills training to employees.

Multiple Admissions Standards. The admissions standards of postsecondary institutions have a tremendous effect on whether or not young people enter a school-to-work program. Many postsecondary institutions--in particular four-year colleges and universities--typically use academic measurements and standardized test scores as the central criteria for accepting students. As a result, college-bound youth may believe that the changes in the amount of time spent in school-based learning resulting from school-to-work actually limit their ability to attend college.

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Postsecondary institutions can address this perception by making a commitment to using multiple admissions standards and by working directly with secondary schools to help develop new methods of reporting academic and occupational competencies, such as student portfolios, which can include samples of student work as well as traditional high school transcripts. These methods can be extended to show how academic credit is applied to school-to-work participation, and how these skills relate to the basic academic courses that colleges require of applicants. Postsecondary institutions can also change student perception of school-to-work participation simply by placing increased value on integrated academic and occupational learning experiences at the secondary school level. Such strategies indicate to students and educators that multiple methods of learning are valued and are viewed as appropriate methods of instruction for college-bound youth.

Assessment and Follow-up. School-to-work initiatives measure their success by how well the system is serving students and helping them achieve positive outcomes. Partnerships between secondary and postsecondary institutions should tie into the larger school-to-work assessment efforts and build an awareness of and reliance on successful outcomes for students. Assessment systems follow students into postsecondary education and the labor market. With regard to postsecondary education, information should be collected on courses, majors, completion rates, work-based learning, and relation to high school school-to-work activities. Information on those who enter the workforce should focus on relation of current responsibilities to prior school-to-work activities, length of time on the job, earnings, and opportunities for training. In addition to student outcomes, partners should jointly develop methods to assess program impact. Specific criteria should be stated up front and reviewed periodically, so all partners know and are in agreement about their goals. Continuous, outcome-oriented evaluation and assessment will help ensure that secondary and postsecondary institutions stay on target in their school-to-work partnerships and will yield empirical data that can help prove the success of the system.

Professional Development. For school-to-work to effectively integrate academic and occupational learning, as well as create coordinated links between secondary and postsecondary institutions, partners must be offered support as they develop new skills. Teachers, administrators, employers, representatives of organized labor, and representatives of community-based organizations should be offered training as they learn new methods of teaching and additional ways to coordinate services with other institutions. Professional development activities can provide instructors with information on how to emphasize the workplace application of academic skills, and teach workplace supervisors and mentors how to focus on the academic content of hands-on learning experiences. This requires regular communication and interaction among teachers from each discipline, as well as from employers and representatives of organized labor, in the development of both curricula and teaching methods.

In addition, teachers and staff from both secondary and postsecondary institutions will have to work together to ensure that young people are provided with a continuum of substantive academic and occupational learning experiences. This can involve high school and college teachers working on teams with school administrators, employers, and representatives of organized labor to design and develop curricula. In addition, teachers can sit in on classes at other institutions to determine how to restructure and/or coordinate their teaching plans.

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Effective Practices

Across the country, there are many innovative partnerships between secondary and postsecondary institutions which work together to help students succeed in their chosen careers. The following effective practices focus on two examples of such partnerships which use articulation agreements, innovative admission standards, joint evaluation and assessment efforts, joint development of curricula, and other mechanisms to weave together a smooth school-to-work system.

The University of Wisconsin System (UWS) has undertaken a variety of school-to-work initiatives and has been actively involved in state school-to-work implementation. An active partner in the school-to-work system since 1992, UWS is represented on a variety of state and local school-to-work partnerships, including the School-to-Work State Policy Group. UWS has also formed its own School-to-Work Coordination Group to ensure that the fourteen UWS institutions are working together in their implementation of school-to-work.

UWS has worked with its K-12 and Wisconsin Technical College (WTC) partners to create competency-based admission criteria for students. In this process, teacher evaluation teams use student portfolios, grades, and real work projects to complete individual student profiles. These profiles examine and assess student competency levels in social studies, science, math, English, and foreign language, and are sent jointly with traditional high school transcripts for use in determining admission to UWS.

In addition, UWS institutions have worked with the Wisconsin Technical Colleges to help WTC students transition more effectively into UWS baccalaureate programs. This has led to the development of over 200 articulation agreements that provide for the transfer of prior credits toward many UWS academic programs. Many of these efforts have been supported by two vocational research centers which provide UWS partners with research and technical assistance. A research arm of the UWS is working to formally evaluate the success of school-to-work students by following up with them in their postsecondary path, whether that is the workforce, technical college, or 4-year university.

The Greater Louisville Youth School-to-Work Initiative has actively engaged postsecondary institutions in its school-to-work system to provide young people with exposure to college and offer them greater opportunities to continue their education after high school. In Louisville, Western High School students begin participation in school-to-work in eighth grade, when they take field trips to Kroger Grocery Store and have guest speakers from Kroger come into their classrooms. In ninth and tenth grade, participants enter a program with a curriculum in retail sales and business, developed with input from the schools, Kroger, and Sullivan College, a local, private four-year postsecondary institution.

In their junior and senior years, students work 10 to 20 hours per week in paid on-the-job training experiences, and at the same time attend classes in business, marketing, and retail at Sullivan College. This exposes students to college-level coursework and further involves Sullivan in the development of integrated academic and occupational learning experiences.

Upon graduation from high school, students have the option to move on to Sullivan and work towards either certification and/or an associate degree. High school coursework is directly applied toward the degree to be earned at Sullivan. This has been made possible by the development of formal articulation agreements between Sullivan, Kroger, and Western High School, which develop clear paths from secondary to postsecondary institutions.

In addition, Sullivan has been an active partner in overall system and participant evaluation. Along with representatives of Western and Kroger, parents, teachers, and other members of the community, representatives of Sullivan serve on an Advisory/Evaluation Board. The Board is involved in the evaluation of student performance and overall system evaluation, and provides a postsecondary perspective to participant selection and program development.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TOPIC, CONSULT THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES:

Effective Practices

The University of Wisconsin System: Larry Rubin, System Academic Planner, 1624 Van Hise Hall, 1220 Linden Drive, Madison, WI 53706-1559 ★ (608) 262-6717 ★ lrubin@ccmail.uwsa.edu.

The Greater Louisville Youth School-to-Work Initiative: Jack Will, Executive Director, Kentuckiana Education and Workforce Institute, The Louisville Area Chamber of Commerce, 600 West Main Street, Louisville, KY 40202 ★ (502) 625-0128.

Organizations

The American Association for Career Education (AACE) is a non-profit organization that connects careers, education, and work through career education for all ages and by advancing connections among representatives of education, business, industry, and the community. AACE supports a variety of educational initiatives, including school-to-work, career education policies, and community partnerships in education. 2900 Amby Place, Hermosa Beach, CA 90254-2216 ★ (310) 376-7378.

The American Association of Community Colleges (AACC) provides a national focus and an agenda that promotes, supports, and advances the cause of its member colleges. AACC meets this mission by developing policy initiatives that promote a national agenda and identify educational and community challenges; advocating this agenda to a broad external constituency; researching to provide data, information, and analysis for community college concerns; providing educational services; and coordinating the efforts of community colleges and related organizations. One Dupont Circle, Suite 410, Washington, DC 20036-1176 ★ (202) 728-0200 ★ http://www.aacc.nche.edu.

The Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) represents the over 6,000 elected or appointed officials who govern community, technical, and junior colleges in the United States and Canada. The purpose of ACCT is to strengthen the capacity of community, technical, and junior colleges to realize their mission on behalf of their students and communities. Major activities of ACCT include assisting boards of trustees in developing and affecting public policy for the achievement of the missions and goals of their institutions and providing trustees with the opportunity to acquire the skills and knowledge required to master their role as board members. 1740 N Street NW, Washington, DC 20036 ★ (202) 775-4667.

The Business-Higher Education Forum (BHEF) at the American Council on Education is an association of business and university leaders that exists to foster constructive understanding between members of the group on issues that are of mutual concern and that influence the nation and the world. BHEF works to bridge the gap between the corporation and the campus while preserving the unique, traditional role of each. BHEF has provided information and analysis on such critical issues as economic competitiveness, education and training, and research and development partnerships. One Dupont Circle, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20036-1193 ★ (202) 939-9345 ★ bhef@ace.nche.edu ★ http://www.acenet.edu/programs/BHEF/BHEF.html.

The Career College Association (CCA) is a national organization of private, postsecondary career colleges, schools, and other entities, established to foster policies that ensure equitable access for students to quality career and skill-specific education. CCA represents private postsecondary colleges in the U.S., Western Europe, the Caribbean, and the South Pacific that prepare individuals for careers in business, industry, and government. CCA's primary objective is to help member institutions achieve the highest possible standards of educational quality and service to their students. In addition, CCA works to improve the accountability and integrity of all institutions in the postsecondary education community. 750 First Street, NE, Suite 900, Washington, DC 20002-4241 ★ (202) 336-6768 ★ ccadl@access.digex.net.

The Center on Education and Work (CEW) is a research, development, and technical assistance unit of the University of Wisconsin School of Education, dedicated to improving linkages between education and work. In addition to policy research, evaluation, and development, CEW operates six development/technical assistance teams aligned with various components of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act. CEW also works with state and local practitioners, as well as secondary and postsecondary teachers, counselors, and school administrators, to design curricula and develop customized workshops and inservice training programs. 964 Educational Sciences, 1025 West Johnson, Madison, WI 53706 ★ (608) 263-3696 ★ http://www.cew.wisc.edu.

The Center for Occupational Research and Development (CORD) is dedicated to conducting research and developing educational strategies, materials, and services to equip learners with the academic foundation and flexible technical skills to enable them to function successfully in the contemporary workplace. CORD developed and maintains the National Coalition of Advanced Technology Centers, an organization of approximately 85 member community colleges, and the National Tech Prep Network. CORD developed two of the model National Voluntary Skills Standards Projects, and has conducted courses and seminars for teachers on school-to-work issues, contextual learning methods, and applied academics. CORD also developed and disseminates curricula that focuses on new and emerging technologies and programs. For postsecondary issues, contact Jim Johnson, CORD, P.O. Box 21689, Waco, TX 76702-1689 ★ (817) 772-8756.

The Education Trust at the American Association for Higher Education serves as a national hub for the growing movement toward school/college partnerships, encouraging college and university leaders to initiate programs and assisting program managers and practitioners to improve their effectiveness. In addition, The Education Trust manages a wide range of local initiatives, providing long-term on-site assistance to local and state-level education and community leaders as they seek to mount and sustain K-16 reform strategies. One Dupont Circle, Suite 360, Washington, DC 20036 ★ (202) 293-6440.

The League for Innovation in the Community College is committed to improving all aspects of community college operation through experimentation and innovation. The League promotes this mission by working as a catalyst, project incubator, and experimental laboratory for over 1,400 community college institutions in the United States. Active in the development of workforce preparation initiatives, the League has worked with community colleges to strengthen their links to other education providers. The League can refer practitioners to school-to-work systems that have developed connections with postsecondary institutions. 26522 La Alameda, Suite 370, Mission Viejo, CA 92691 ★ (714) 367-2884 ★ http://www.league.org/.

The National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) provides professional resources for principals, assistant principals, and other school leaders attempting to promote the intellectual growth, academic achievement, character and leadership development, and physical well-being of youth. NASSP has undertaken a variety of initiatives to promote school-to-work, including sponsoring conferences and preparing publications. In addition, NASSP has worked to improve communication between schools, colleges, and other postsecondary institutions. Contacts: Dr. John Lammel, Director, High School Services; Mrs. Maryellen Parker, Director, Assistant Principal Services; Dr. Gwendolyn J. Cooke, Director, Urban Services ★ 1904 Association Drive, Reston, VA 22091-1537 ★ (703) 860-0200 ★ http://www.nassp.org.

The National Association of State Directors of Vocational Technical Education (NASDVTE) is the Washington-based organization of state vocational education agency heads committed to leadership and outstanding performance in vocational technical education. NASDVTE has a growing membership of over 200 senior state staff and concerned business, labor, and other education officials who share the directors' commitment to quality occupational education at the secondary, postsecondary, and adult levels. The Hall of States, 444 North Capitol Street NW, Suite 830, Washington, DC 20001 ★ (202) 737-0303.

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Postsecondary Education helps students set and meet challenging postsecondary educational goals and promotes excellence in postsecondary education. 4082 Regional Office Building, 7th and D Streets, SW, Washington, DC 20202 ★ http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/index.html.

The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE) administers the funds distributed to States under the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act (Perkins Act) for vocational-technical programs offered in secondary and postsecondary schools. OVAE administers and provides services to the States and the field in response to the mandates of the Perkins Act. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education, 4090 MES 330 C Street, SW, Washington, DC 20202 ★ http://www.ed.gov/offices/OVAE/.

The U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Employment Outlook: 1994-2005 Job Quality and Other Aspects of Projected Employment Growth. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, December 1995.

For additional information, please contact:
The National School-To-Work Learning and Information Center
400 Virginia Avenue, Room 210
Washington, DC 20024
Phone: 1-800-251-7236
Fax: 202-401-6211
E-mail: stw-lc@ed.gov
Internet: http://www.stw.ed.gov